

**Speech by His Excellency SUZUKI Kazuhiro, Ambassador of Japan to Australia
on the occasion of the reception to celebrate the birthday of
His Majesty the Emperor of Japan
Wednesday 4 March 2026**

Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC,

His Excellency, and my dear friend, Mr Simeon Beckett SC,

The Hon Richard Marles MP,

Senator the Hon Don Farrell,

The Hon Michelle Rowland MP,

The Hon Madeleine King MP,

The Hon Ted O'Brien MP,

The Hon David Smith MP, Chair of the Australia–Japan Parliamentary Group,

Distinguished Ministers,

Senators and Members of Parliament,

Secretaries of the Federal Government,

Senior officers of the Australian Defence Force,

My fellow ambassadors,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you all very much for coming to our Residence this evening.

What a wonderful crowd!

For me, this is my third Emperor's Birthday Reception here.

Time really flies.

And this year is especially meaningful.

In June, we will mark the 50th anniversary of the NARA Treaty, and to commemorate this, I have received a message from Foreign Minister MOTEGI Toshimitsu, which I would like to share.

"Excellencies, distinguished guests,

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your presence here today to celebrate His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday. On February 23, His Majesty the Emperor celebrated his 66th birthday. I am truly honoured to join you all in offering our heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of His Majesty's birthday.

This year marks the milestone of 50 years since the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Japan and Australia, also known as the "NARA Treaty." Relations between Japan and Australia have significantly developed over the past 50 years across various fields, including politics, economy, security, culture, and people-to-people exchanges, based on our deep levels of trust.

As the international environment becomes increasingly challenging, the cooperation between Japan and Australia is more crucial than ever for the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region and the international community. This was clearly confirmed during my meeting with Foreign Minister Wong last October, shortly after my assumption of the position of foreign minister. With this recognition, I am determined to dedicate myself to further strengthening our bilateral ties, looking ahead to the next 50 years of cooperation.

Furthermore, the involvement of our people is indispensable for the future of our relations. With the 50th-anniversary logo recently unveiled, I understand that many commemorative events will take place across Australia throughout this year. With your continued cooperation, I hope to elevate Japan-Australia relations to even greater heights.

Once again, I join you all in praying for the good health of His Majesty the Emperor and the prosperity of the Imperial Family, as well as the health and happiness of everyone gathered here today."

Ladies and gentlemen,

The strength of the Japan–Australia relationship is obvious just by looking around this garden.

And my Minister's message was also clear.

So now, let me add one thing: my own reflections after almost three years here, and how fortunate I feel to serve in this country.

People often ask me what I like most about Australia.

My answer is always simple: the Aussies, and your kindness.

You know, I am the kind of person who often leaves things behind somewhere.

I still think I'm young — and I insist that I am.

And somehow, here in Canberra, they always come back to me.

How kind people are here!

And it is not only lost property.

In May last year, during the federal election, I quietly visited polling places with my son in Yarralumla and Deakin, as a small learning experience for him.

The volunteers kindly gave us democracy sausages — which, I must say, may be one of Australia's greatest inventions — and they even took time to explain what was happening at the polling stations.

My life here has been full of these small but beautiful moments.

To me, this free, open and egalitarian society — and the people who make it so — is Australia's great strength.

When I travel around Australia, people often ask me: "Isn't Canberra boring? Isn't Sydney better? We have beautiful beaches. Isn't Melbourne better? We have culture. Isn't Brisbane more comfortable? Canberra is freezing."

But I always say — not as a diplomatic answer, but because I truly mean it — that every part of Australia is wonderful.

And despite what some people say about Canberra, my wife, Shiho and I genuinely feel that life here is fantastic.

Why?

Because the people are wonderful, wherever I go.

Australia is the sixth foreign country where I have lived for more than two years.

And I can honestly say that Aussie inclusiveness, kindness and hospitality are second to none.

So let me simply say: thank you very much for welcoming us and my Embassy so warmly.

Tonight, I hope you will enjoy many Japanese touches here at the Residence.

This is our chance to return, in a small way, some of the kindness that we have received from all of you.

This evening has also been made possible by the generous support of many Japanese companies and organisations.

Many have joined us from across Australia, and some have even come all the way from Japan for this occasion.

So thank you.

どうも有難うございます。

I would also like to thank my Embassy colleagues.

Our Defence Attaché, Colonel Nakaoka, will return to Japan just after this Reception.

Nakaoka-san, where are you? Please raise your hand.

You are not only a trailblazer in our Self-Defense Forces, but together with your husband and your two-year-old daughter, Riko-chan, you have made a wonderful contribution here in Canberra.

So, let's give her a round of applause.

Thank you very much.

I am truly fortunate to work with such an outstanding team.

Our Australian staff are also terrific.

Among them, Greg is probably wearing the most eye-catching Japanese outfit tonight — so let me mention him.

Greg has made a great contribution to Japan–Australia ties over many years, going back to his younger days in Japan.

There is a short video about him on the Embassy's Instagram and Facebook, and I hope you will take a look.

Greg, you look terrific — more like the authentic Japanese Ambassador than I do thank you!

Our national staff and the diplomats sent from Japan are all wonderful colleagues, and I am grateful to every one of them.

And finally, my heartfelt thanks to our iron chef, Takami-san, and all the Residence staff, who have spent so many long hours preparing tonight's reception.

So, Thank you again, everyone.

I hope you enjoy the evening.

ご清聴ありがとうございました。

Thank you.